



Lausanne World Pulse

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PUBLISHER'S MEMO

Engaging with Our Difficult Past through Christ Our Reconciler

By Doug Birdsall

“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and he has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us.”

– 2 Corinthians 5:17-20a

“For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by his life!” – Romans 5:10

“For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell upon him, and through him to reconcile all things to himself, having made peace through the blood shed on his cross; through him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.” – Colossians 1:19-20

New beginnings, a fresh start, a blank slate. From celebrating the turn of a new year, to weddings, the birth of babies, and graduations from school, we hold on to the promise of starting afresh and anew for a better tomorrow, while leaving the disappointments, hardships, and heartaches of yesterday behind us.

It is the pain felt from the friction or clash of sinful people against sinful people—from small, petty, and passive ways to overtly violent actions. Pain—whether personal, communal, and/or societal—runs deep in our memories. Ours is a broken world, filled with broken people and relationships. We need something beyond ourselves to confront the pain and bring true healing.

As the Church prepares and celebrates Easter, the season of Lent reminds us of our human frailties, sinful nature, and all of creation’s longing and groaning for salvation, restoration, and reconciliation unto each other and especially unto God. It is for this re-creation and the restoration of the way things were supposed to be before the Fall that the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ was necessary and preordained before the foundations of the earth.

It was the work of Christ through his incarnation, in his ministry, upon the cross, and through his resurrection that illustrates the very mission and heart of God to reconcile the world to himself. God’s

work of reconciliation through Christ transforms believers into God's new creation—transformed now into ambassadors of his reconciliation.

All believers, together as the Body of Christ, are called to be agents of hope and reconciliation in our broken and fragmented world. However, too often the Church is caught up in the very conflicts in which it is called to be an agent of reconciliation—places where the divisions of ethnicity, tribe, race, sex, caste, social class, or nation seem to run deeper than the bonds of eternal brotherhood bought by the blood of Christ.

This is evident throughout history up to our current contexts. We see this in sociocultural remnants of apartheid in South Africa, the scars of ethnic cleansing in the Balkans, genocide in Rwanda, racism in the USA, and bitter and brutal divisions in the Sudan, India, Ireland, and the West Bank. Unfortunately, whether through silent acceptance or overt violence, Christians can be found caught up in these conflicts.

Although Christians can be found bitterly divided on both sides, as the Body of Christ we are called to pray, critically self-examine, discern, and repent from all that does not align with God's reconciling mission. To be effective agents of God's reconciliation, we must learn to boldly name and confess the sins of the past and present, engage in the hard work of forgiveness, live in the re-created ways of repentance empowered by the Holy Spirit, and encourage others to courageously do the same.

Reconciliation is not *forgetting* the painful past; rather, it is *naming and remembering* it. We are empowered to engage with our difficult pasts because of God's justice, forgiveness, and grace.

By engaging in this difficult and painful process in the worst conflicts around the world, Christians have been the faces of compassionate care and hopeful reconciliation. As agents and messengers of God's reconciliation with the world, Christians must be a people of hope—not a hope of something that is wished for and of which we are uncertain, but rather a hope of things we are certain.

We must offer our broken world the healing and hope in God's victory over the powers of darkness and death through the work of Christ. Over time, true and deep reconciliation can break in. We are certain of this hope because it is God's mission of reconciliation through Christ.

We therefore must be bold and prophetic ambassadors for Christ. We cannot lay silent in the midst of destructive powers and conditions around us, but rather actively stand against destructive and dehumanizing powers. Although we have failed greatly in loving our neighbors as ourselves and in being the ambassadors we are called to be, we must continually pray and renew our commitment to boldly reach out in love, compassion, and humility with the hope of reconciliation in Christ.

As we study, discuss, reflect, and strategize upon **Christ Our Reconciler** and our role as his ambassadors, may the Lord add his blessing and multiply our efforts in bringing his message of healing, salvation, and justice in Christ to our broken world.

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NEWS BRIEFS

AROUND THE WORLD: GoBible Traveler Holds Entire Audio Bible

The [GoBible Traveler](#) device is available in two new portable audio Bible editions, The GoBible Traveler and the Spanish GoBible Viajero. The GoBible Traveler is a lightweight, hand-held, portable device preloaded with the entire audio version of the Bible featuring over seventy hours of audio. It is offered in either the King James Version, The New International Version, or The Nueva Versión Internacional. Each GoBible Traveler retails for \$59.95USD and includes instructions, earphones, and one AAA battery that can power the device for over twenty hours. Both versions can be played through two GoBible accessories: a set of portable speakers or an FM transmitter for car stereo playback. ([Assist News Service](#))

CHILE: Speaking Hope in the Aftermath of the Earthquake

As the nation of Chile continues suffering from the aftermath of the March earthquake, TWR was also affected as its partner office there, Radio Trans Mundial (RTM), sustained severe damage. According to RTM-Chile national director Sigisfredo Alvarado, "All of those involved in the [RTM] ministry here in Chile are physically well, but the office ended up in a heap of rubble." Fortunately, no one was inside the building at the time the quake hit. The extent of the damage and what it may cost to repair are still being assessed. TWR's Member Care Radio, in partnership with Dr. Brent Lindquist of [Link Care Center](#), is responding to comfort the people of Chile by distributing a series of radio programs in Spanish for caregivers and survivors of crisis and catastrophe. These programs, based on the *Biblica* (formerly International Bible Society) book *When Your Whole World Changes*, present a clear Christian context throughout while bearing witness to the love and care of God in the midst of tragedy and devastation. The book will also be distributed as part of an on-the-ground ministry to earthquake victims. ([TWR](#))

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: Major League Baseball Player Spreads Christ's Love

While the United States is gearing up for America's favorite pastime, a Major League baseball player is helping kids learn the game while also introducing them to Christ. According to Kathy Redmond of [Compassion International](#) (CI), Albert Pujols of the St. Louis Cardinals sponsors CI's entire child survival program in Batey Aleman, a community of Haitian migrant workers who harvest sugar cane in the Dominican Republic. Sadly, Redmond explains, "The sugar cane industry is defunct. People are living in a dust bowl, where drug dealers come by. You can see men playing dominos in the streets because there's nothing for them to do." There is also nothing for the children to do. So, Redmond says, Little League baseball is being brought into Batey. As for Pujols, Redmond adds, "He uses baseball as a platform. But, really what he's interested in is spreading the Word of God and being a good Christian man and leading people to the Lord."([Mission Network News](#))

ERITREA: Cargo Container Program Highlights Human Rights Abuses

Teenagers who attended the [Elim Pentecostal Church](#) annual youth department's [Serious4God](#) event, *The Gathering*, in February 2010 were invited by [Christian Solidarity Worldwide](#) (CSW) to watch a human rights film about Eritrean prisoners while caged inside a metal shipping container. CSW's youth program, *Outcry*, is showing the film to help raise awareness of the plight of some three thousand Eritreans detained without trial in horrific conditions by their government for holding Christian beliefs. The documentary depicts the story of one such prisoner, a gospel singer, imprisoned and held in a cargo container for three years. The young delegates will be invited to send a postcard of protest to the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detentions, whose remit includes the plight of those held in Eritrea. ([Christian Solidarity Worldwide](#))

ESTONIA: Funding of Upgraded Transmitter Complete

[TWR](#) will soon be able to reach deeper into Russia with the life-changing truth of the gospel with 200,000 watts of power from Estonia. This is because a critical Estonia transmitter upgrade project has been fully funded—the result of over \$400,000USD worth of answered prayers. TWR will now be able to reach an additional fifty-two million people and a potential total audience of 159 million people. The next step

involves funding the programs that will air on the upgraded Estonia transmitter. Each program is specifically targeted to meet the needs of Russian listeners. (TWR)

ETHIOPIA: Women of Global Action Reaches Out to Entoto Mountain Community

Women of Global Action (WOGA) is a network of over 150,000 Christian women leaders around the world. Together, they educate women on how best to influence their world with God's love as they address the issues of injustice affecting women and girls. WOGA's Entoto Outreach Project ministers to an Ethiopian community of approximately four thousand people living with HIV/AIDS on Entoto Mountain, located on the outskirts of Addis Ababa. The project helps individuals obtain access to health care and income generation opportunities, and eventually reintegrate back into society. The project also helps the children of these individuals through after-school activities, health screenings, tutoring, and other educational activities. (Mission Network News)

INDIA: Radicals Attack Christians in Karnataka Slum

On 17 February 2010, a group of three hundred Hindi radicals entered the homes of Christian believers in a slum located in Mysore, Karnataka state, and assaulted them for their faith. According to the **Global Council of Indian Christians** (GCIC), radicals belonging to Bajrang Dal, a right-wing Hindu organization which is the youth wing of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), went to twenty-two Christian houses in a slum. The GCIC report said that they indiscriminately attacked and beat up men, women and children. It is also alleged that the saffron-clad radicals "misbehaved with the women engaged in the household chores and hit them with stones and beat them with wooden clubs." A source said the attackers then compelled some of the victims to sign affidavits saying they were being "forcibly converted" to Christianity. (Assist News Service)

Morocco: Parents and Staff Deported from Orphanage

Christian workers at the **Village of Hope** (VOH) orphanage in Morocco were recently deported, the building closed, land confiscated, and the children left without parents. Local papers accused the Christians at VOH of proselytism. VOH is located in Ain Leuh, an area known for prostitution in Morocco. When young women get pregnant, they often come to this area to have their baby and then are forced by their family to leave the baby behind. In 1999, Christians asked the governor for permission to restart an orphanage that had closed a few years earlier and to begin taking in these abandoned babies. They did this overtly as Christians. After years of passing government inspections, this time authorities came in and announced only a few days later that the parents and staff had to pack and leave. As the bus pulled away, parents and staff could hear the tears and cries of the children left behind. The Moroccan government is cracking down on various religious issues, one of them being proselytizing. (Village of Hope)

NIGER: Coup May Be a Positive Step

Niger's junta staged a coup on 18 February 2010 and put former Nigerian president Mamadou Tandja under house arrest. In spite of how it looks, the coup may be a step toward stability. Carl Moeller with **Open Doors** says it's the third one in eighteen months. "There is hope that this coup led by moderate elements within the opposition party would actually, in fact, restore a larger degree of democracy over the long term." Open Doors co-workers say calm has been restored in the capital city of Niamey, and the country's borders have now been re-opened. They also say they have been able to continue their work. 2010 is a strategic year for Open Doors. They have plans to present four *Islam Awareness* seminars to pastors and one to youth. (Mission Network News)

NIGERIA: Protests Held in Jos after Fulani Muslims Massacre Hundreds of Christians

Youths in Bukuru and Barkin Ladi are holding protests following the recent massacre of more than two hundred Christians in Zot, Dogo Nahauwa, and Rastat villages by armed Fulani Muslims. Entire families

are reported to have been murdered, despite a heavy security presence, although the final death toll is still to be confirmed. Survivors of the massacre say armed men arrived at around 3 a.m. on 7 March 2010, and woke the villagers simultaneously with gunfire and shouting, before setting homes on fire and attacking men, women, and children with knives. Army assistance was requested, but arrived after the massacre had taken place. Some youths are now calling for the army to leave, as they question its role in the violence. The attackers are said to have traveled into the area from the neighboring Shari'a state of Bauchi during curfew hours. The violence is thought to be in retaliation for an incident in Kuru Karama on 19 January 2010, which was widely reported as a Christian massacre of 150 Muslim villagers. However, the village head of Kuru Karama, a non-Muslim who fled the violence, has since confirmed that non-Muslim houses and bodies were among those shown in international media reports. ([Christian Solidarity Worldwide](#))

RUSSIA: Children Receive over Fifty Thousand Christmas Gifts

According to Anita Deyneka, president of [Russian Ministries](#) (RM), a total of 50,183 Christmas presents were given away to needy children and their families or caregivers during December 2009 and January 2010. In Ukraine, students and graduates from [School Without Walls](#) (SWW), a program run by the Association for Spiritual Renewal, participated with forty-five local churches and eleven other groups to deliver 9,915 Christmas presents to needy children, street kids, and orphans in forty towns and villages. In Russia, 206 local churches joined SWW to deliver 40,268 Christmas presents to needy children in regions, including Chechnya and South Ossetia. Michael Minyazev with RM in Moscow says, "[These gifts] help the local churches to build bridges to these children and to the local population. It's not preaching the gospel directly, but first we build, and after that, we start telling them about Jesus, about his love." ([Mission Network News](#))

SOUTH KOREA: Nazarene Mission Camp Prepares Diverse Group

Sixty enthusiastic participants from thirteen churches across the Korea District of the Nazarene Church gathered 1-2 February 2010 for Mission Camp 2010. The camp, sponsored by the Korea Nazarene Mission Center (KNMC) and held on the campus of Korea Nazarene University (KNU) in Cheonan City, was the first such camp ever held in the Korea District. Participation in the camp is a requirement for anyone wanting to be sent from the Korea District as a missionary. The ages of the participants ranged from fourteen to forty and included high school and university students, pastors, business people, Nazarene Missions International leaders, a clinical psychologist, and a medical doctor and his wife. Regional director Verne Ward commented, "It is inspiring to see the growing interest in following Jesus' command to make disciples among people who are yet unreached. It is encouraging to see how the Korea Nazarene Mission Center is working hard to develop an efficient and culturally appropriate process and accountability structure for the sending of missionaries from Korea." ([Nazarene Communications Network](#))

UNITED STATES: Only Five of Top Twenty-five U.S. Churches Report Growth

Membership has increased in the Roman Catholic Church—the largest Christian body in the United States—but the number two Southern Baptist Convention, along with most traditional Protestant denominations, reported continuing decline, according to new figures released by the [U.S. National Council of Churches](#). Both the Southern Baptists and Catholics reported membership losses in *2009's Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches*; in the 2010 edition, released on 12 February 2010, however, only the Catholics reported a rebound, with a 1.5% growth rate, to more than 68 million members. Southern Baptists held on to the number two spot, at 16.3 million members, but that figure represented a 0.2% drop from 2009 and the second consecutive year of decline. The Presbyterian Church (USA) experienced the greatest loss among the top ten denominations (3.3%), down to 2.8 million members. ([Ecumenical News International](#))

THEMED ARTICLES: Christ Our Reconciler

The Role of the Church in Reconciliation in South Africa

By Dion Forster

Introduction

The Christian Church is one of the most pervasive and significant institutions in South African society. For the past 350 years Christianity and the Christian Church have made significant contributions to the best and the worst of South Africa's history.

Christian History in Southern Africa

Christianity first settled on the southern shores of Africa in 1652, when the Dutch East India Company founded a community of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk to serve the soldiers and officials at the refuelling station then known as the "Cape of Good Hope." The first officially-recorded missionary to be despatched to southern African was Johannes Theodorus Van der Kemp of the London Missionary Society who arrived in the Cape in 1799.

The efforts of the early missionaries were met with mixed success. Robert Moffat admitted in a mission report that he had "fewer Christians than fruit trees," while David Livingstone famously became an explorer "largely because he was discouraged by the lack of converts in his southern Tswana mission station."¹

However, with the arrival of the English settlers in the early 1800s, missionary activity in southern Africa received a great boost. By 1911 there were more than thirty missionary societies active in southern Africa with a total of 1,650 missionaries in the region. It was said that, "South Africa may well claim to being...with the possible exception of the South Sea Islands, the best occupied mission field in the world."²

Christianity has had an immeasurable impact on just about every aspect of South African life. In the last National Census, 79.8% of South Africans indicated that they are Christian³. According to that census 7.3% of Christians in South Africa are Methodist, 7.2% are Reformed, 7.1% are Roman Catholic, 5.5% are Congregational, 3.8% are Anglican, and the remaining 48.8% of the population belong to Pentecostal, Charismatic "Independent," and African Initiated Churches.⁴

Some may celebrate these statistics; however, the reality is that the Church in South Africa has a great deal of work to do in order to help Christians to overcome the devastating effects of the racial ideology of *Apartheid*.

Apartheid and the Church in Southern Africa

As is the case with the Church throughout the world, the social and political climate of the day played a significant role in the development and appropriation of Christian mission on southern African soil.

The most significant and disturbing social and political changes began to take effect in southern Africa during the twentieth century.⁵ Many scholars would agree that the racial ideology of *Apartheid* was by far the most significant social and political force that the Church had to contend with in southern Africa.

First, a brief synopsis of this system. *Apartheid* (an Afrikaans word meaning “separateness”) is a system of ethnic separation in which persons were classified into racial groups according to the colour of their skin. The main groups were black, white, coloured (persons of mixed racial descent), and Indian. These race groups were separated from one another geographically, akin to the Indian “stans”—the First Nation reserves of the United States and Canada, and the aboriginal reserves in Australia.

Cunningly, this ensured that black citizens, who are the majority population group in southern Africa, did not have a right to vote in “white” South Africa (even if they lived there) since they were only eligible to vote in their “independent homeland.” The black independent homelands were the most remote, least arable, and least economically viable tracts of land in southern Africa. Implementing this system from the early 1940s meant that many native South Africans were forcibly removed from their ancestral lands throughout southern Africa.

The land itself was expropriated and either put to use by the government or sold to white South Africans to establish farms. In order to maintain this system of segregation, and force black persons to remain in the black homelands, black South Africans were systematically oppressed and disenfranchised by various means.

Economically, they were disenfranchised through job reservation (meaning that certain jobs and professions were not open to black South Africans), Bantu Education (a system of education that trained black South Africans to do nothing more than unskilled and manual labour), inequitable access to health care, and more severe restrictions on freedom of movement.

The violent and systematic implementation of this evil system had considerable, and damaging, effects on southern African society as a whole, and particularly on the individual South Africans who suffered under it. The effects of Apartheid are likely to be felt for many generations to come.⁶

Within this context, the missional question must be: *What would God want Christians to do in order to change society to reflect the Kingdom of God?* Surely, mission in this context would be quite different from mission in China, or even in some parts of Europe? It was out of this realisation that the churches in southern Africa began to be shaped for their mission of healing and transformation. At times, the mission of the South African Church had a decidedly social and political overtone.

Neville Richardson notes just how influential and significant this ideology of systematic oppression was and how it would affect the Church:

...the church under apartheid was polarized between “the church of the oppressor” and “the church of the oppressed.” Either you were for apartheid or you were against it; there was no neutral ground. Given the heavy-handed domination of the minority white government, those who imagined themselves to be neutral were, unwittingly perhaps, on the side of apartheid. This complicity was especially true of those Christians who piously “avoided politics” yet enjoyed the social and economic benefits of the apartheid system... While young white men were conscripted into the South African Defence Force, many young black people fled the country to join the outlawed liberation movements that had their headquarters and training camps abroad. What could the church do in this revolutionary climate? And what should Christian theology say now?⁷

Out of this context the churches of southern Africa sought to bring about an approach to Christian salvation that is free from oppression and subjugation, is filled with God’s love that celebrates diversity without dividing and the reality of being graciously united with God and with all the people whom God

loves, and includes a society that reflects the values of God's kingdom. This became the Church's mission.

What was required for this mission was a measure of flexibility that allowed for an interaction between orthodoxy (what we believe) and orthopraxis (what we do), an approach to faith that recognised and celebrated the truth of who God is (personal piety), yet was expected to enact God's will for individuals and society (social holiness).

This concept of mission as social action may sound somewhat utopian. However, I will now sketch just one example of how the Church brought about liberation, restoration, healing, and transformation—signs of God's kingdom—as part of this mission emphasis.

Christianity and Christians in Post-Apartheid South Africa—The Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Many Christians, such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu, gave the best years of their ministry to model the possibility of a racially integrated society. These efforts came at great personal cost. For nearly forty years church pulpits were one of the only relatively safe places from which the policies and abuses of the government could be addressed. Sadly, many of those who spoke against these abuses were placed under banning orders (i.e., banned from preaching, attending public gatherings, or being in groups of more than two or three persons). Others were jailed for extended periods or murdered.

In spite of these threats, the Church developed many prophetic statements (such as the confession of Belhar, the Coettesloe Declaration, and the Kairos document), and supported the task of social and political liberation in South Africa.

When Apartheid ended in 1994 with the first democratic elections in South Africa, the task of facilitating healing and reconciliation was brought to church leaders for implementation. A ground-breaking process, called the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)⁸, was rolled out across South Africa under the leadership of Archbishop Tutu.

The TRC was an official body sanctioned by the newly-elected government to hold hearings at which victims of gross human rights abuses could give statements of their abuse. The perpetrators of the abuses had an opportunity to give testimony and request amnesty for their crimes.

The intention of the TRC was to allow victims an opportunity to tell their stories and perpetrators to tell the truth and apply for amnesty so that retribution could be averted in the "new South Africa." Central to the TRC was the notion of forgiveness and restorative justice.

Perhaps the most important lesson we can learn from this particular expression of the Christian faith is that the context in which mission and evangelism takes place is critical in shaping the ministry of the Church. A second important lesson would be that we should avoid the temptation of judging success in ministry by numerical growth—as was shown, in some instances numerical growth is an indicator of need rather than success.

What is certain is that the Church in southern Africa is faced with a number of complex contextual challenges which will require a great deal of courage and faithfulness if the Christian faith is to continue to make a positive impact upon society.

Conclusion

I hope the discussion above has made two points: (1) mission as social action is a truly holy, God-

honouring, and practical way to transform individuals and society for God's glory and kingdom and (2) mission is not just "religious" in nature. The parent, school teacher, economist, and even politician, can be part of God's mission of healing and transformation. True Christian mission requires the active participation of all Christians. This is the work of every disciple.

Endnotes

1. Isichei, Elizabeth. 1995. *A History of Christianity in Africa: From Antiquity to the Present*. New York: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 100).
2. Ibid, 100.
3. See the *2005/2006 Christian Handbook*. Johannesburg: WITS University Library. These statistics are also available online at www.statssa.gov.za/census01/html/default.asp. A theological critique of this data is available in Hendriks, J and Erasmus, J. 2005. "Religion in South Africa: 2001 Population Census Data." *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 121: 88-111.
4. See Forster, Dion. 2008. "God's Mission in Our Context—Critical Questions, Healing and Transforming Responses." In *Methodism in Southern Africa: A Celebration of Wesleyan Mission*. Eds. Dion Forster and Wessel Bentley. Kempton Park, South Africa: AcadSA Publishers, 70-99.
5. It would not be possible to chart all of the significant shifts in society and politics in southern Africa in a study of this scope. For an insightful and scholarly account of the social and political trends from the first colonies at the Cape through to the dying days of Apartheid in South Africa, refer to Sparks, Allister. 1990. *The Mind of South Africa*. New York: Ballantine Books.
6. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apartheid> for a basic, accessible introduction to the history of Apartheid. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crime_of_apartheid for a succinct outline of the crimes of apartheid.
7. In L. Gregory Jones, Reinhard Hütter, and C. Rosalee Velloso Ewell, eds. 2005. *God, Truth, and Witness: Engaging Stanley Hauerwas*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 231-232.
8. See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Truth_and_Reconciliation_Commission_\(South_Africa\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Truth_and_Reconciliation_Commission_(South_Africa)).

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The Church Can Unite a Nation

By Heidi Loubser and Mario Denton

Can a church truly unite a nation? Is it possible? The answer is a resounding yes! Committed individuals such as Graham Power and Angus Buchan are good examples of what is possible when one person is committed to establishing the heart of God in the world around him or her.

Second Corinthians 5:18 says that God has given us the ministry of reconciliation and that we must take it seriously. The Church has a great destiny and role to play in South Africa. The challenges are great, but the rewards are greater. The Church in South Africa has a number of obstacles to overcome in achieving reconciliation, but we are reaching our goal step by step.

The Abolition of Apartheid

The Church had its first great victory when the Apartheid regime was abolished, but the challenge of changing racist mindsets still remains. Power had a vision from God and started a movement called Transformation Day—a day of prayer for South Africa. In just a few years this movement spread around the world to become the [Global Day of Prayer](#).

Thousands of people gathered in stadiums, repented of racism, and asked forgiveness of each other and of God.

Our nation was brought before God in prayer; indeed, it was a magnificent day of unity. Reconciliation began, but does not end, there. We must continue praying for change and living as examples to others. We must continue to love all people equally, regardless of race, colour, or background. We must exert godly influence so that all races can have equal opportunities in South Africa, and abolish the myth of “white power.”

Interdenominational Interaction

Another challenge we are beginning to overcome in South Africa is interdenominational interaction. Instead of denominations feeling threatened by each other’s doctrines and practices, they can unite based upon the fundamental truths of God. The Church is and should remain a symbol of hope and reconciliation for everyone, believers *and* non-believers.

Denominations in South Africa have started to network with each other, sharing conferences and meetings, and opening their doors to each other. Individuals are becoming aware that they are responsible for their own relationship with the Lord and are taking ownership. Rather than arguing about theological differences, they are standing up for themselves and for the true power of the Holy Spirit and the word of God. This is what growth is about: sharing and learning from one another and from the word.

Unity makes us stronger, and when we share what we have with each other, everyone is blessed. This is a mature perspective. Ephesians 4:3 encourages us to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Now that we are beginning to understand the power of becoming one team—God’s team—we must take the blessings we receive and help those who are struggling, regardless of their belief.

Living with Integrity

The Church has, by nature of being an example, a role to play in influencing the justice system in South Africa. This is a great challenge and responsibility, because it means we can change the course of our nation and the course of history. The Church has the responsibility to promote what is right according to God’s word.

We need to educate and train every generation on the benefits of godly integrity and accountability. We have all seen the consequences of corruption and bribery: innocent people are victimized, the poor are exploited, power is abused, and wrongs are covered up. If it is left to deteriorate, revolutions will result. According to Deuteronomy 30:19-20, God gives us a choice:

I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey his voice, and that you may cling to him, for he is your life and the length of your days.

Is this how we want to live? For the sake of conscience and because God knows and sees all, we must do what is right even when the cost is dear. Living well means living right; Psalm 1 is very clear about that. The Church must promote godly values and principles in all areas of life, for all people, so that justice and

justice only will be served. If we want to take pride in our nation, we need to take pride in self-respect and integrity first. We need to take pride in the word of God and live accordingly.

The Gift of Faith, Hope, and Love

Times may be hard, but the Church has one great advantage—faith, hope, and love (1 Corinthians 13:13), because we have and know an Almighty God who loves us unconditionally. This is why we can have joy when we are struggling, hope when we are suffering, forgiveness when we are wronged, security in Christ when nothing else is certain. Our nation needs this great gift, and we have the power to give it if we ask God for help.

How do we give this gift? Every individual has been graced with different gifts according to God’s design and purpose, so each one must do what God has given him or her to do and train others to do the same.

Those who are called to be entrepreneurs should trust God for inspiration to start new businesses and create new employment opportunities. Those who work in politics and government must encourage godly values, use their influence to eliminate corruption, and implement better systems of accountability. They must educate the public on voting and encourage prayer for our leaders in government.

Those in education must ask God’s help and grace to raise up an innovative and hopeful generation that can discern what is truly important in life and work hard to accomplish their dreams. Those who work in the health sector can pray for breakthroughs in medical research and technology and pray for the gift of healing to be manifested wherever they work. The Church is meant to live out their gifts in the workplace, because that is where change is most necessary. There is so much to be done and it is all possible with the help of God!

Reconciliation is so much more than just reuniting individuals. There is power in unity—power with which to do something great. Everyone has a role to play, something to contribute to make our nation (and others) a more blessed and anointed place.

Find the gift God has given you and use it for his glory! The Church is full of individuals who carry greatness within them—the greatness of knowing that God is with them in whatever they do.

“Have I not commanded you Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” - Joshua 1:9

Heideli Loubser is happily married to her husband, Shaun, and works as a writer and editor with Mario Denton of Crown Marketplace in Africa. She is passionate about writing truths in a relevant way for the public. **Dr. Mario Denton** is an international teacher and industrial psychologist. He uses his academic and corporate background to help people reach their full potential in the workplace. He is married and has three children and one grandchild.

To Be Black, Evangelical, and “Left” in the Struggle against Apartheid

By Moss Ntlha

Faith in South Africa is predominantly Christian faith, commanding a demographic majority of close to eighty percent of the population. Other religions are vastly outnumbered, thanks to centuries of Christian missions in South Africa. In this is both the advantage and disadvantage of the Christian presence in South Africa.

The *advantage* is that as a nation we can celebrate a broad cultural consensus that is indebted to the Christian faith. For example, if at some stage a politician were to get carried away and seek, in the name of the secular, post-Apartheid state, to banish Good Friday or Christmas, the nation's strong trade union movement would more than likely march on the capital demanding "hands off Christmas!" In this way, we have a cultural addiction to the "perks" that come with a Christian empire.

The *disadvantage* is that the nation's dominant religion cannot escape bearing the lion's share of the blame in the scandalous Apartheid past—for Apartheid was spiritually nurtured and theologically rationalised in the Church.

It is useful to nuance discussions about Christianity in South Africa somewhat in order to be more true to the facts.

Fact #1: The theological justification of Apartheid was more pronounced in the white Afrikaans-speaking churches, while acquiescence with Apartheid was more a white English-speaking affair.

Fact #2: African Indigenous churches emerged mainly as a result of a black insistence upon separating the essence of the Christian message from its cultural and socio-political co-option by the state. This inevitably became a sword that divided Christian brothers/sisters from Christian brothers/sisters on the basis of how they lined up in respect to the sin of Apartheid. Instead of becoming a uniting influence, Christianity became a divisive factor.

Fact #3: Evangelicalism was not spared the raging divisions of life under Apartheid. The evangelical movement in South Africa owes its recent historical roots to Europe and North America, from whence it was transplanted onto the African soil. The transplant was not without serious challenges for a Euro-American mission movement forged in the context of the individualism of the West, looking to be at home in an African context in which community and relationships are strong.

At best, evangelicals kept a low profile in the raging ferments of the struggle for life and truth under Apartheid. They felt ill-prepared by a theological approach focussed more on inner piety than public morality. So it is that in the decade leading up to the demise of Apartheid, black evangelicals felt called upon to issue a theological pamphlet called "The Evangelical Witness in South Africa: Evangelicals Critique Their Theology and Practice."

This introduced a strange phenomenon in the life of the Church in South Africa and in the nation. I recall a newspaper headline at the time of the publishing of this document that screamed out: "A right-wing group blasts Apartheid!" To be evangelical, as far as the media was concerned, was to be right wing. Such was the public image of evangelicalism, that in the public imagination, the message of the gospel was connected with oppression and siding with the rich against the poor.

Much has happened since then that hopefully has changed this perception. I recall years later when a gay lobby website analysed the stakes against them in their push to have same-sex marriage legalised in post-Apartheid South Africa. They noted that in most parts of the world Christian conservatives opposed them. In South Africa, the rarity was that "progressive" evangelicals like myself and Catholic Cardinal Wilfred Napier were opposed to their agenda.

Being a True Christian Witness

I came to faith at the height of anti-Apartheid struggle. As part of making sense of evangelical belief, I wrestled with such defining features of evangelicalism as personal conversion, salvation by faith in the

sufficiency of the cross, the authority of the Bible, personal morality, the priority of evangelism, and faith in the work of the Holy Spirit.

Keeping the faith required the contextualisation of what was in many ways a religion co-opted to serve the interests of the Apartheid state, and allowing Jesus to proclaim good news to the poor, recovery of sight to the blind, and to set at liberty those who are captive. Thankfully, this was made much easier by the publication of the Lausanne Covenant, which helped to widen the lens of evangelical missiology.

Being black and evangelical, therefore, meant a choice to be a witness in at least three respects.

First, the central message of Christianity is wrongly married to the apparatus of Apartheid repression. The Bible, largely used to justify repression, needed to be reclaimed as good news to the poor, as proclaimed by Jesus. At stake, by and large, was a South African questioning not the text of the Bible, but the messengers of the Bible. Their witness left much to be desired. The people of South Africa “read” the lived version of the Bible, and said “No thanks!”

Christianity was for them a religion of the oppressor. Rebelling against oppression included rebelling against the religion of that repression. It is for this reason that a prophetic Christian tradition emerged in South Africa, pointing to a different Christian practice where biblical faithfulness and rejecting Apartheid went together. The statement that God has not left himself without a witness in every age is true.

Second, being black and evangelical meant to witness that Jesus is relevant to the deepest questions posed by the black experience. To say this is to affirm that Africans can never be free until they are free in Christ. In a publication entitled *Looking Back, Moving Forward: Reflections by South African Evangelicals*, Lucas Ngoetjana writes,

There was a sense that those who had tasted the freedom which comes through the redemption of the blood of Jesus, who experienced the freedom of the spirit...want to be human and free in all spheres of life...¹

Evangelical freedom opens the prison doors to which the human soul is caged and begins an unstoppable quest for wholeness in every area of life. This evangelical truth is an important insight to bear in mind in light of much revolutionary arrogance observable in Africa’s post-liberation politics.

Third, liberation of South Africa from the sin of Apartheid is a Christian duty. Evangelicalism believes in salvation by grace through faith, as opposed to works. This is at once a great relief, as well as a big problem for Christian witness. It is a *relief* because there is really nothing we can do to merit God’s love. When others find evangelicals cocky and overconfident, even childlike in their faith, if they boast at all, it is in Christ, not themselves. The sufficiency of the cross is an important part of evangelical confidence.

It is also a *problem* because this has accounted for the lack of evangelical enthusiasm for social responsibility. Evangelical practice in South Africa used the cross as an alibi that somehow absolved them from guilt and complicity with Apartheid. South African Baptists (the white) are on record as having said that: “The views and attitudes of an individual in racial matters do not enter into the realm of his being justified by faith.”²

It is for this reason that black evangelicals cut ties with white evangelicals during the struggle against Apartheid. As we saw it, proclaiming good news to the poor required choosing sides for the oppressed.

We reached a historical moment where the push for justice seemed too much for the pull of unity and fellowship. It was a moment that posed a dilemma of something that was at once sinful and just.

Thankfully, by God's grace, evangelicals had the familial resilience to regroup after the end of Apartheid, forming the non-racial [Evangelical Alliance of South Africa](#).

Endnotes

1. Kretschmar, Louise and Moss Ntlha, eds. 2005. *Looking Back, Moving Forward: Reflections by South African Evangelicals*. Johannesburg: TEASA, 51.

2. Spong, Bernard and Cedric Mayson, 1993. *Come Celebrate: 25 Years of the South African Council of Churches*. Johannesburg: Edenvale Printers, 30.

Moss Ntlha is general secretary of the [Evangelical Alliance of South Africa](#).

Tear Down this Wall: A Note for Pastors and Laity

By Kent Humphreys

Former U.S. President Ronald Reagan stood at the wall in Eastern Europe in June 1987. Following are excerpts from that historic speech:

Behind me stands a wall...a barrier that divides the entire continent of Europe. ... armed guards and checkpoints... This scar of a wall ...There is one sign that would advance dramatically the cause of freedom and peace. General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity... if you seek liberalization: Come here to this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!

The 12-foot concrete wall extended for one hundred miles and stood as a stark symbol of the decades-old Cold War. Two years later, East Germans issued a decree for the wall to be opened. Families that had been separated for decades were finally reunited.

When I attended Lausanne II in Manila in 1989, my friend, Lee Yih, delivered his memorable “Frogs and Lizards” speech. In it, he compared the ministry of the clergy to frogs, whose food comes to them. He continued by comparing the ministry of the laity to lizards, who go hunting in the nooks and crevices of their world to find their food. It grabbed the imaginations of the attendees, many of whom realized for the first time the significance of the differences between the two groups, and the importance of each.

I again thought of walls, and prayed that the wall of misperception and misunderstanding that existed between the “professional minister” and the “ordinary believer” would finally begin to come down.

This wall was erected within a few hundred years of Christ's ascension, and still affects us today. Lausanne is about the “whole Church” presenting the whole gospel to the whole world, but the “whole Church” does not feel the primary responsibility to accomplish this. Although there has been progress made over the last twenty years, there is still much to be done. The workplace movement of the late 1990s and this present decade has caused the creation of hundreds of workplace organizations around the world.

During a recent trip to China to visit with pastors and workplace leaders, I saw many of these forming in the major cities. In China, key pastors are helping lead the efforts. But can we identify the restraints that

are holding back progress that the Holy Spirit wants to see in us as we come together to minister? Since I have been a business leader involved in this issue for over thirty years, and have led both a parachurch ministry and several businesses, I feel qualified to address some of the issues.

Please understand that a small minority (perhaps one to five percent of the “professional vocational ministers”) *do* understand the problem and are modeling the biblical paradigm. Another fifteen to twenty percent may think they understand (and may even preach it), but they *do not model it*. I am convinced that a full eighty percent of “ordinary” believers *do not understand their calling* as full-time ambassadors of Christ.

Obstacles for Pastors and Christian Leaders

Let us first address some of the reasons why pastors and leaders of Christian groups are hesitant to build bridges and let the walls come down.

- They believe in the “priesthood of every believer,” but have not seen a biblical model of it.
- They do not see the wall they have created that separates the “professional” and the “ordinary” believer.
- They have confused teaching with equipping and modeling.
- They have elevated programs and buildings over relationships, and growing their local church over building God’s kingdom.
- They have allowed walls to exist so that they will not have to be vulnerable to a small group or other individuals.
- They hate to give up control and are intimidated by strong lay leaders.
- They do not understand the difference between leading followers and equipping leaders.
- They enjoy the platform and attention of the crowds.
- They have elevated the teaching of the mind over the changing of the heart.
- They are afraid of partnerships with other churches, other denominations, and even other strong leaders in their own churches.

But these walls would not exist if the “laity” were to exercise their position, go to their pastors, and work together to tear the walls down. However, most “ordinary” believers are quite content to pay and let the “professionals” do the job.

Obstacles for the Laity

Let us now address some of the reasons laity have chosen to let the walls remain.

- They have little or no idea of the biblical teaching of the “priesthood of every believer.”
- They think the “professional” has a “special” call, and that they are very ordinary.
- They have no understanding of the principle of biblical “calling.”

- They do not understand the biblical model of the equipping ministry of the saints.
- They do not see their responsibility to be doing the ministry where they live, work, and play.
- They have bought into the fact that they are to help the pastor and the professional church staff to do their ministry.
- They would rather pay hired “professionals” to do it than to have to do it themselves.
- They would rather tell the pastor what to do and have him take care of them, pray for them, preach for them, entertain them, and make them feel good.
- They like creating heroes and putting pastors on pedestals as celebrities, then they love to take them down when they fall.
- They do not feel qualified, trained, or gifted.
- They do not want to be full-time ambassadors for Christ and on call twenty-four hours a day.
- They want the freedom to do their own thing.
- They are afraid God might call them to be missionaries to some far-off land.

Suggestions for Pastors in Equipping the Laity

What can a pastor do to break down the walls? Let me share a few suggestions I give in my book, *Shepherding Horses*.¹

- Instead of trying to build your church or create programs, try to build bridges of long-term relationships and concentrate upon a few at a time. Do not worry about what others will think or about losing your job. Follow the model of Jesus.
- Seek to understand the issues those in your church are having, particularly in the workplace. Go and visit them in their workplace. In fact, volunteer to be a chaplain in the workplace one day a week. It will change your ministry and how you preach.
- Affirm each of your people in his or her calling.
- Equip them to minister where they live, work, and play.
- Commission them as ministers formally in front of the entire church.
- Release them to serve God where they are.

Suggestions for Workplace Leaders to Build Bridges with the Pastor

Below are suggestions to help workplace leaders build bridges with their pastor.

- Invite your pastor out to lunch. It may take months for him to be vulnerable and open up, but take the first step. Share with him a struggle you are facing. Ask him how you can pray for him. Promise total confidentiality.

- Share with him some of the ways God is using your workplace position to impact others for Christ. Give him real examples and he will be greatly encouraged.
- Invite him to be a part of your small group of workplace leaders that may meet weekly or monthly. Eighty percent of your pastor’s issues are the same as yours. He is the CEO of a church, a volunteer organization. It has some unique challenges of its own.
- You and your spouse could take your pastor and spouse out to dinner. Try to keep the conversation on family and hobbies, instead of just church business. The walls will begin to come down.
- Get together and dream of ways that both of you as leaders can encourage your congregation to get “outside the walls” of the church into the city, nation, and world. Use your unique gifts and learn to work together.

As you begin to build bridges, you will be energized in your work and ministry and the Holy Spirit will bless your efforts. May God give you the courage to make the first small step.

Endnote

1. Humphreys, Kent. 2008. *Shepherding Horses: God's Plan for Transforming Leaders*. Whitsett, N.C.: Diakona Publishing.

Kent Humphreys has been a business leader for over thirty years. From 2002 through 2007 he was president of Fellowship of Companies for Christ International (FCCI), an organization that equips and encourages Christian business owners who desire to use their companies as a platform for ministry. He now serves as a worldwide ambassador for FCCI.

PERSPECTIVES

On Partnership and Vision 2010: Toward the Last Languages

By Bob Creson

Two young men trampled the trails of Guatemala together in 1917. One was Cameron Townsend—a 22-year-old American intent on winning Guatemalans to the Lord by distributing Spanish Bibles. The other was a Guatemalan named Francisco Diaz, who had only been a Christian for a few months.

Francisco, whose mother tongue was Cakchiquel, recognized on a deep personal level that if the Cakchiquels were ever to have a meaningful relationship with God, then they and God would have to share a common language. But why, he wondered aloud to Cameron, did that language have to be Spanish? Surely God could speak Cakchiquel, too, couldn't he?

The Birth of a Vision

Townsend accepted the challenge, and a vision was born. After translating a New Testament for the Cakchiquel, he went on to found **SIL International** and **Wycliffe Bible Translators**, with the goal of translating the scriptures into every language in the world.

In 1999, Wycliffe and other partners adopted Vision 2025—a vision that all language communities needing one would have a Bible translation program in progress by 2025. Humanly speaking, this was an

impossible goal because at the pace at which Bible translation was taking place, it would be 2150 before the final translation was started. We agreed this was unacceptable and committed to work with a renewed sense of urgency.

God has honored that commitment and, with our partners, we are now participating in the greatest acceleration of the pace of Bible translation ever witnessed by the Church. Last year, 109 translation projects were started—the largest number ever recorded. The remaining number of translation needs stands near 2,200.

The Vision Grows

Vision 2025 has exponentially increased the need for resources (prayer, people, and funds), and in response, Wycliffe Bible Translators USA has undertaken the [Last Languages Campaign](#). The goal of the campaign is to contribute our God-led share of the resources needed to begin the last Bible translation projects.

At the official launch of the Last Languages Campaign on 22 November 2008, as I was walked to the platform to speak, I passed Zachary Peterson, the 8-year-old son of Todd Peterson, [The Wycliffe Seed Company](#) board chair. Zachary jumped to his feet, reached out, and gave me a high-five. I will treasure that image for a long time. That small act of excitement, support, and encouragement represented to me God's goodness, joy, and pleasure at that to which we were committing ourselves. It was a living, visible picture of God's enthusiasm for reaching the least, the last, and the lost.

Working toward a Common Goal

One of our local pastors who spoke at the launch gave us a charge: "Please, God first!" At the end of the service, all of us stood together to commit ourselves in faith to what lay ahead. And what lay ahead has been most encouraging. Last year my wife and I attended the graduation ceremony of twenty-three story crafters from eight different language communities in India. The workshop was sponsored by the [New India Evangelistic Association](#) (NIEA) and facilitated by The Wycliffe Seed Company. Wycliffe USA contributed funds and consultants, including a staff member assigned to OneStory—an oral storying partnership of [Youth With a Mission](#), [Trans World Radio](#) (TWA), [Campus Crusade for Christ](#), and Wycliffe.

Ten months after the workshop started, mother tongue scriptures were available in eight languages representing sixty-five million people. These came in the form of biblically accurate, culturally relevant oral stories. In three of these languages, the stories represented access to scripture for the very first time! [Faith Comes By Hearing](#)—another partner organization—recorded each newly translated story.

The results have been amazing. Storytellers report that their non-Christian neighbors are showing great interest in the stories. In this part of India only 0.3% of the population professes to be Christian, and only one-third know how to read or write. So, according to partners like Dr. Alexander Philip, director of NIEA, the translation of stories becomes a church-planting effort—not only because it is an oral strategy, but because it uses the mother tongue.

Rev. Samuel Hembrom, secretary of the Brethren in Christ Church, who gave some of his personal time to help in the story project, agrees with Dr. Philip: "This is a strategic time to use the mother tongue, and we are convinced that the Lord is going to bring in a great harvest."

Dr. Philip wrote in July 2009 that eight of the men who completed the storyteller workshop—working in three different languages—were participating in a Luke Partnership Workshop. These workshops, a

partnership between the *JESUS* film and The Wycliffe Seed Company, focus on the translation of the Gospel of Luke, which becomes the script for the *JESUS* film.

Dr. Philip and his colleagues view the preparation of the *JESUS* film script as extremely significant. “Without doubt, the *JESUS* film has been the most effective tool in seeing a breakthrough in church planting in this area,” says Pramod Paul, church-planting leader with the NIEA.

Partnerships are one of the reasons the pace of Bible translation is increasing so rapidly. I am convinced that our work in the future will best be completed through partnerships like this one in India, and that in many places translation projects will begin with storying. The progression from oral stories in the mother tongue, to *JESUS* film scripts based on the Gospel of Luke, to complete New and Old Testaments supported by literacy programs—all accomplished with an abundance of partners—is proving to be an effective strategy for getting the word into the minds and hearts of people as quickly as possible.

The day before he died Townsend is reported to have said, “I guess I’m not going to see it.” “See what?” he was asked. “The last language started.” After a pause, he said, “Finish the task.”

As we launched our Last Languages Campaign, we set out to honor God and spread the vision of Bible translation for the last languages, and we committed ourselves to seeing the task through. Building on the vision of Townsend—which never faltered, even on his deathbed—we believe that, by God’s grace, we and our partners will accomplish the task of starting the last Bible translation need in this generation. And we remain convinced, as Diaz was, that effective evangelism and church growth rest on the foundation of the scriptures in the mother tongue.

Bob Creson was appointed president/CEO of **Wycliffe Bible Translators USA** in 2003. He oversees Wycliffe USA's Last Languages Campaign, an historic effort to generate resources to start the remaining Bible translation needs by the year 2025.

Surprised by God: How God Used Us to Impact a People Group for Him

By Rick Dunn

“Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.” - Ephesians 3:20

A Calling

When we reflect back to the days when we first became Christians, we remember the excitement we felt in our newfound relationship with Jesus Christ. Everything seemed fresh and new. We were so excited about our faith and all that God has saved us from that we would talk to everyone who would listen.

For many Christians, this early zeal wears off with time as we fit into a routine in the Christian life. As time passes, we sometimes expect less rather than more from God. We don’t necessarily expect God to do anything miraculous in our lives or accomplish something great through us, but God is true to his word and desires to do something great to advance his kingdom through us.

We are reminded in 1 Peter 2:9 of being chosen and having a purpose in this world: *“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”* The priesthood of all believers is God’s strategy to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to a spiritually dying world. But do average Christians see themselves making a difference in God’s global plan?

A Mission

In 2006, our local church was invited to become part of *Finishing the Task* and adopt a people group in a closed Asian country. Adoption meant that our church was making a commitment to develop and implement a strategy to bring the gospel to this group of 137,000 people who had never heard the gospel. This was a huge commitment, and we wondered if God could really use a small group of lay people to change the spiritual trajectory of an entire people group.

This walk of faith began by hosting a dessert time when about twenty people were invited to attend. The people we invited were known leaders within our church and community. We prayed before the meeting that God would lay a burden on someone's heart—someone who had the time and leadership ability to develop a team of peers to accomplish the new mission God had given us.

The vision was laid out to the entire group and God answered our prayer. Over the next few days we followed up with people we had invited through individual meetings, and a man named Greg raised his hand and said, "I will do it." With God's help, he would be the one to put a strategy together to reach these people with the gospel.

A Plan

Greg spent the next month gathering a small team who was willing to commit to the project. The effort began with researching all that could be found out about the country, the people, what evangelistic resources might be available in their native tongue, and finally potential indigenous ministry partners.

As this team of lay people began to work together, they learned that a translation of the *JESUS* film had recently been completed in the heart language of this group. They also found several Christian ministries operating in the capital city only a few hours flight away. The team was able to make contact by email with ministry leaders in the capital city and a plan was made to visit "our" people group in a few short months.

There was much to do before the trip: flights to arrange, visas to obtain, money to raise, and a plan to develop on how to get the film equipment and prints into the country. As the departure date drew near, things seemed to fall into place, and soon we would see the land and the people that had been on our hearts and in our prayers for months.

Six people comprised the Survey Team. Our first stop was Thailand for a quick change of planes; then we were off into the spiritual darkness of this oppressive Buddhist nation. From the moment we stepped off the plane into the sweltering heat and humidity with the many-armed militia leading us through customs, we felt the tension of our circumstances. Our team was carrying a film projector, screen, frame, and 16mm prints of the newly-translated films in our luggage.

We knew we needed a miracle if we were to get these items through customs. All of the items were spread throughout our luggage and each of us attempted to pass through separate customs lines. I carried the 16mm prints.

I was the last one to go through—all the others had made it. I was on the third round of questions from progressively higher ranked customs officials. I explained for the third time that I wanted to pay the duty required to take the films I had brought to my friend. Finally, the official told me it would be expensive. I was prepared to pay whatever was necessary. He walked me over to a cash register and after a moment on a calculator, he told me the duty would be US\$23. I breathed a sigh of relief and gladly paid the money. God's word was going forth—he had performed a miracle.

After spending several days meeting with ministries in the capital city, we signed an agreement with one of the ministries to recruit, train, and supervise workers to show the *JESUS* film among our people group for the next three years. We then returned to the airport to begin a long journey by plane and car to meet our people group.

An arrangement had been made to show the *JESUS* film for the first time to a gathering of tribal leaders from our people group. We had the privilege of being present and seeing the first of this people group make commitments to follow Jesus Christ. It was a surreal experience.

An Ongoing Blessing

We are now completing our third year working with our partner in this distant land. In a recent report from in-country, we celebrated that there are now more than two hundred believers in some stage of discipleship and gathering in groups. We are now working on how to effectively train leaders and gather these people into church communities.

As we reflect upon all that has happened, we have been surprised by God—that he has chosen to do so much with such average people. If God can do such a great work through our efforts, then he can work through anyone to change the eternal destiny of all people—even people half a world away who don't share a common language or culture. All it takes is a willing heart to say yes to God.

Rick Dunn is president of [Global Frontiers Project](#). He also serves on the [Lausanne Strategy Committee](#) and is a board member for [Emerging Leadership Initiative](#).

The Tale of Two Brothers: Innovation in Missions and Church Planting

By Elizabeth Childs Drury

I recently volunteered in the exhibit hall at a Christian conference. Standing at the booth of a relief and development organization, I frequently engaged in conversation with a woman at the booth next to us. She was a representative of a traditional mission department for an evangelical denomination. Our exchange about innovation was not encouraging.

“I have really become annoyed with the Business As Mission people,” she said. “I talk to prospective missionaries who say they want to go into missions as businesspeople. When I ask them why, they inevitably get around to the idea that it will cover their expenses. I'm sorry, but making money, liking business, or covering expenses is not a good enough reason. If that's what they're after, they shouldn't try to be missionaries.”

I suggested she find out more about Business As Mission, saying that the movement mobilizes a different crowd by allowing for innovation. But her mind was made up. For this mission agency, closed doors would continue to characterize the response to people whose abilities and passions were administrative rather than pastoral.

A Tale of Two Brothers

I should have told her the following mostly-true story about two brothers—one, whose mission dreams were never realized, the other, whose mission effectiveness was never validated.

Ron and Billy grew up on the “right” side of the tracks in the town of Midland, Mississippi (USA). Their home—a broad-porched, Magnolia-shaded thoroughfare for mentors and mentees in ministry—was located on the most visible corner of Bible Boulevard. In addition to teaching philosophy and science and

serving as dean of the Christian college just a few blocks away, their father had helped to build many of the campus buildings and cultivated a garden in his yard from which grapes, melons, and vegetables would supply the salaries of faculty and pastors during the waning years of the Great Depression.

Their mother taught music at the college, played the piano for the church and the district, and served as president of the state chapter of the Women's Missionary Society. On mornings too numerous to count, the two boys awoke in their bedrooms to the scent of breakfast cooked by their father (though he had already begun his brisk walk to campus) and to the sound of piano instruction already in progress in the living room.

As they grew, Ron and Billy had important decisions to make. What would they do with their lives? Would they serve the Lord, as their parents hoped? If so, how? Having answered and avoided altar calls and revival services by the dozen, they knew that a sure way to please God would be to become pastors or missionaries (though the boys felt neither a call nor an interest in those areas). Time marched on, and when at around age twenty they finally had to decide, Ron chose business and Billy chose engineering.

Years later, after they had started families of their own and had become successful in their careers, it was clear to everyone on Bible Boulevard that they had not gone into "the ministry."

Ron

Although more of a reserved thinker than an easy conversationalist, Ron had advanced through the management ranks on the business end of an automobile manufacturer and had consistently (though quietly) made his faith known among his co-workers.

He had served on the administrative boards of his church and of the Christian college where his parents had devoted their lives. Because of his business and management acumen, individuals and organizations frequently sought his advice. But when Ron reached his mid-fifties, he began to wonder whether he had done all he could in witnessing to others and in serving the Lord.

One day, after hearing yet another pulpit proclamation equating devotion and holiness with professional ministry, Ron decided to take a radical step: he quit the highly administrative job for which he had honed his skills for thirty years (and which he enjoyed immensely) and announced he was embarking on the life of a full-time missionary. His destination was Mongolia, and his task (after raising support and attending language classes) was one-on-one evangelism.

His family, including Billy, was surprised at his decision. His wife, although wanting to support her husband, felt bewildered; she had no desire to go to the next county, much less overseas. And she felt that God had gifted Ron in administration, not evangelism. But Ron's desire to be obedient—to "go all the way for the Lord"—was unwavering.

His first term turned out to be his only term. He completed it faithfully and returned to the U.S. He was a hero on Bible Boulevard. His marriage had survived the experience, and he had generally enjoyed the adventure. But he felt frustrated at his own limitations in sharing his faith freely with the Mongolian people. He wondered whether other missionaries felt such disillusionment.

Despite the awe-struck gratitude he received from the people of Midland, he felt guilty, for he had returned home with scant few salvation stories to report. The depth of his commitment and the enormity of his sacrifice had not made him effective as an evangelist. "It's hard soil over there," fellow missionaries would reassure him (and one another). "The Holy Spirit just didn't seem to be moving," others said.

Still, he found himself wrestling with the same question that had prompted him to go overseas in the first place: Am I doing all I can for the work of the Lord?

Billy

Like Ron, Billy received promotions and accolades for the expertise he developed in his career. Like Ron, he served as a committed and actively contributing member of his local church. But unlike Ron, Billy died suddenly in his mid-fifties. He never became a pastor or an overseas missionary; however, at his funeral the people of Bible Boulevard and the masses from Midland gathered to marvel at a mystery.

In the line that stretched down the halls, through the lobby, and into the parking lot of the funeral home, mourners told one another about how they had been influenced most for Christ not by a professional minister but by an industrial engineer. As second in command, Billy had raised the company to the highest industry standards of quality and integrity, and he had modeled and proclaimed the life-giving message of Christ to co-workers, clients, and neighbors. Billy's family asked that donations (instead of funeral flowers) be sent to the college, so that a scholarship could fund Christian students wanting to serve and witness through excellence in business.

In an Ideal World...

Ron and Billy would have engaged enthusiastically in the approaches to kingdom work presented in David Garrison's *Church Planting Movements*¹ and in Steve Rundle and Tom Steffen's *Great Commission Companies*². Both books would have fit paradigms they already knew, and both would have excited them about serving the Lord through abilities and interests they had been perfecting for their entire adult lives.

Ron would have chosen the church-planting approach advocated by Garrison. He would have been energized by the promises of big, quick results. Recalling his sense of frustration as an evangelist in Mongolia, Ron (the introvert) could easily imagine applying his strategic and administrative mind to the role of strategy coordinator—a role in which planning, facilitating, and trouble-shooting were needed more than giftedness in one-on-one evangelism.

In a short span of time and without deep relationships, Ron doubted his success at leading many to Christ. But as strategy coordinator, Ron knew that he could quickly and efficiently pack a powerful punch by steering successful, fruit-bearing, task-oriented, working relationships with a handful of fellow believers. He had known throughout his career no greater thrill than looking at the big picture and then mobilizing staff to accomplish the goals in their own ways.

“If God could use me to do that with the gospel among unreached people,” Ron thought, “I could really make a difference!” And Bible Boulevard would surely approve, since Ron would be doing this work as a bona fide missionary.

Billy, on the other hand, would have chosen the longer-term approach of Rundle and Steffen. He loved engineering and knew the textile and heavy construction industries inside and out. He knew how to run such companies. He did not feel worthy of the lofty title of missionary and would have felt embarrassed by all the attention from Bible Boulevard.

But sharing Christ was his deepest passion—what his work in industry, his role as a father, and his volunteerism at church were all about. To think that he could continue in his profit-seeking, quality-watching, innovating desk job and also join hand-in-hand with evangelistic, church-planting missionaries would have surpassed his wildest dreams of serving the Lord.

In the home in which Ron and Billy grew up, ministry was holistic, and it was a family affair. In an ideal world, Ron and Billy would have cooperated to identify an unreached people group in a place where conditions were favorable for industry and for a church-planting movement. They would have joined forces synergistically to form an economically sound, missionally active Great Commission company to bless the whole community, nation, or region.

Like their parents, they would have cooperated and used their unique abilities and passions to reach and mobilize unique groups of people for God's ultimate purposes.

Alas, It Is Not an Ideal World...

But, alas, they lived not in an ideal world, but in one small dot on the map of Mississippi. And in that world, as soon as sympathetic supporters in Midland would find out that dear Ron was working with worldly Billy, whose aim was to turn a profit, the whole scheme would sound suspect, and interest and prayer would ebb away.

"We should have known it was too good to be true," a naysayer would say. "Ron's low support goal alone should have tipped us off."

"Yes—plus the fact that he was planning to shift off all responsibility to the nationals instead of doing it himself," another would grumble indignantly. "That is certainly not the way he was raised."

"His hard-working parents would not have approved, that's for sure."

"And what about Billy, for heaven's sake? Whoever heard of raising venture capital for ministry?"

For "the ministry," as defined on Bible Boulevard, neither Ron nor Billy was a good fit. To discover this truth, Ron had to quit his job, travel around the world, jeopardize his marriage, raise thousands of dollars, and face discouragement. And even after all that, he never found his stride. Billy, not despairing over his incompatibility with traditional notions of ministry, thrived as a witnessing Christian in business, but received neither affirmation nor prayer support for his efforts.

The harvest is plentiful. But the workers? They may be sitting in shareholder meetings or inspecting an industrial production line. They will increasingly look a bit different than they did a generation ago. May the mission and church-planting worlds continue to innovate—and to affirm the diversity of abilities that contribute to success.

Endnotes

1. Garrison, David. 2004. *Church Planting Movements: How God Is Redeeming a Lost World*. Arkadelphia, Ark.: WIGTake Resources.
2. Rundle, Steve and Tom Steffen. 2003. *Great Commission Companies: The Emerging Role of Business in Missions*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

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Where Is God? A Christian Reflection on the Haitian Earthquake

By J. John

Where is God? That question is an understandable reaction to the appalling earthquake in Haiti, where on 10 January 2010, around 200,000 people died in under a minute. Similarly, we can ask the question of the 8.8 magnitude quake that occurred in Chile on 27 February 2010 and others that have occurred since.

A second question follows : *How can anyone believe—or even want to believe—in a God who would crumble houses onto families, topple hospitals onto patients, and collapse schools on children?* Here we face the old challenge of the sceptic: *If, as we Christians claim, God is both all-powerful and good, then why did this happen?* Surely, they say, only one of two conclusions is possible and neither leaves the idea of the Christian God intact. Either we must conclude that God *couldn't* stop the earthquake from happening, in which case he isn't all-powerful, or he *wouldn't* stop it from happening, in which case he isn't good.

To try and answer such challenges would take a book. Here I simply want to raise some issues that need to be considered in any response. Yet before we do this we must pause. The best and most honourable response to suffering has always been to act first and philosophise later.

Looking at Disaster through a Christian Lens

The people of Haiti or Chile do not need an explanation of why this event happened— they have more pressing problems. This is the same principle that applies in our own personal relationships. When we go and visit a bereaved friend, we do not try and explain what has happened; instead, we put our arms around them, weep with them, and try and help. Indeed, we read in John's Gospel that Jesus wept at the funeral of a friend (John 11:35).

The Christian God is not a remote, detached being who doesn't care about suffering; instead, he suffers with us. Interestingly enough, there are a number of places in the Bible where God says, in effect, to curious human beings: “Don't waste your breath asking questions; get on with the task of doing what you're supposed to be doing” (see Job 37-24, John 21:21-22; Acts 1:6-8). In short, the priority is response first and reflection later. With that in mind let us consider some points.

First, it is worth considering the curious fact that nearly every normal person, whether atheist or believer, has similar reactions when faced with such a disaster: all of us find them an outrage and feel sympathy for the victims. Yet if we hold to the atheist position that there is no God, this is rather puzzling. If human beings are quite simply no more than the product of natural selection over millions of years, then there is absolutely no reason why we should be appalled by such events.

If we are created by nature, then why do we find ourselves uncomfortable with any of nature's acts? Does not Darwinism teach that we are adapted to this world? So why should earthquakes (or volcanoes or tsunamis) provoke our outrage?

Wouldn't it be more logical to shrug our shoulders and say, “It's the way the earth works,” and simply walk on without another thought? Yet no one would do this. The fact is that human beings *do* suffer when others suffer. The best explanation of this is the one the Bible gives: that human beings are made in God's image (Genesis 1:27). This means many things, but one is surely this: we are designed to be both indignant at things that are immoral and compassionate to those who suffer.

Second, it is worth asking ourselves whether part of the problem is that we have reshaped the God of traditional Christianity (holy, righteous, and loving) into a somewhat cosy, celestial grandfather (closely related to Santa Claus) whose role extends no further than supplying our wants and solving our

problems. We need to remind ourselves that Christianity is two thousand years old and has been faced with the problem of suffering since the beginning.

After all, in the first few centuries AD, the average life expectancy was little more than half of what it is today in the West. Death, disease, and disaster were ordinary events. Yet the Church grew. Since then, Christians have experienced both private and public disasters, and yet kept their faith intact. Ironically, Christianity as a religion does much better in cultures where suffering occurs than in those where prosperity prevails.

In other words, what we bystanders consider to be the intellectual problem of suffering may be less of an issue to those who are actually suffering.

Third, we need to be logical about the way the universe works. In the real world, things always have consequences, so although we find both gravity and water good, both can kill us. The same rule applies to the vast process of plate tectonics: volcanic activity and mountain building is good because it allows the release of gases and nutrients into the atmosphere and oceans. Without moving plates, this world would eventually become flat, lifeless, and dull. After all, the same tectonic motion that caused the Haitian earthquake has given rise to the awesome beauty of the Caribbean islands. It is probably not possible to have a habitable world without some kind of plate tectonics and all the perils that go with it.

Fourth, Christianity has never taught that the world we see is how God intended it to be. The result of sin means that the created order is distorted so that disease and destruction occur. In Genesis 3:17 we are told that the ground is cursed because of sin. The point is that while we do have an elegantly designed earth, all is not as it should be. Yet if Christianity teaches that the earth is not what it *was*, it also teaches that it is not what it *will be*. The earth has already been redeemed by Christ's death on the cross, and one day it will be remade in glory (Romans 8:19-22).

Fifth, it will not hurt to keep earthquakes in proportion. The occasional catastrophic earthquake should not disguise the fact that, statistically speaking, they are a relatively minor hazard of living on earth. In 2009 earthquakes killed less than two thousand people worldwide and in 2007 the figure was six hundred. In comparison, each year there are around three thousand road deaths in the U.K. alone and roughly ten thousand murders by firearms in the USA.

In the twentieth century alone, wars and genocide killed at least 180 *million* people. Perhaps the most sobering statistic is the estimate that some sixteen thousand people worldwide die *each day* due to malnutrition. In other words, dreadful though it was, the death toll of the Haitian earthquake is equivalent to two weeks' worth of ordinary human hunger.

If we are to accuse God of causing unnecessary suffering, we must also find ourselves guilty of the same charge.

Sixth, while we may wish to blame God, it is undeniable that human beings have made matters worse. Haiti suffered from overcrowding, poor infrastructure, an inadequate healthcare system, and had made almost no preparations for a disaster, despite warnings by reputable geologists that a major earthquake was overdue. The result was that there were far more casualties than there should have been.

Earthquakes of similar magnitude have occurred in developed countries with only a fraction of the dead and wounded. The 1989 Loma Prieta, California, 7 magnitude quake saw 63 deaths, while the result of the 7.2 quake magnitude in the densely crowded Japanese city of Kobe in 1995 resulted in 6,434 deaths. The most recent 8.8 magnitude quake in Chile left less than one thousand people dead.

Haitian unpreparedness was in part responsible for the number of casualties. Widespread corruption had impoverished the country and cheated on building quality. Some argue that things were made much worse by the religion and culture of Voodoo, which holds that life is so governed by unpredictable supernatural powers that planning is a waste of time.

Yet the neglect was not just that of the Haitian leaders. For decades, Western countries were only too happy to see corrupt dictatorships persist in Haiti as long as they prevented the spread of Communism from neighbouring Cuba. There were also the usual inequalities of trade between rich and poor nations. True, the developed world gave Haiti financial assistance, but by paying insufficient attention to where the aid was going, they poured petrol on the flames of corruption. The disaster in Haiti was magnified by human errors and we must share some of the blame.

Last, we must ask whether it is possible that some of the unease about the Haitian earthquake comes from the way that it reminds us of two unpalatable facts: that we are neither immortal nor in control of our lives. We do not like to think of death, and our culture places a very high value on human power and autonomy. How can we not be “the masters of our fate”? There is something almost traumatising about the way that the shaking of the solid earth undermines (sometimes literally) all that we are and have achieved. Without warning, in seconds, destruction and death are upon us. Earthquakes remind us that life is more than comfort and prosperity.

Moving Forward as Humble Sojourners

So how *are* we to see the earthquake in Haiti? Jewish culture at the time of the New Testament evidently held to a tight cause-and-effect link between sin and disaster. They believed in the simple creed “bad things happen to bad people.”

Remarkably, Jesus rejected this view. So in Luke 13:1-5 we read:

Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. Jesus answered, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on the—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”

A similar teaching occurs again in John 9:1-4. Yet if earthquakes are not actually *acts* of judgement, then they are *symbols* of judgement. In Revelation 16:12 we read of an earthquake heralding the appearance of God as Judge of the world. However else we view the Haitian earthquake, it may be no bad thing to see it as a warning and a reminder of our own mortality. It may be no coincidence that at the crucifixion of Christ there was an earthquake (Matthew 27:51). It is one of many pointers to the significance of that death.

In Christ, God himself took upon the judgement that should have been ours, so that we might be spared it. It is as if, amid the tumbling buildings of an earthquake, Christ allowed himself to be crushed under the weight of the falling masonry so that we might escape being crushed by judgement.

Where is the Christian God in such earthquakes? The answer is that he is in them so that we might be spared worse.

J. John is a Greek-Cypriot evangelist, speaker, and author who resides in London with his wife. He can be reached through his ministry, [Philo Trust](#).

LEADERSHIP PROFILES

Leadership Profile: Kath Henry, Northridge Vineyard Christian Fellowship in Thornleigh, Sydney, Australia

Q. Tell us about your family.

A. I am married to a wonderful man, Phil, and have two amazing children: Beth, 19, and Sam, 15. One of our greatest delights is to be together as a family.

Having recently come back from leave where we travelled together for three months, we have many wonderful memories of laughter and fun. Meals times are the best in our household and we all try to have that time together.

Q. Give us a brief overview of your work and ministry.

A. I am the co-senior pastor, with my husband, of Northridge Vineyard Christian Fellowship in Thornleigh, Sydney, Australia. I oversee the women's ministry at church. My husband and I are members of the Australian Vineyard Churches board.

I enjoy being a chaplain with Kairos Outside (a ministry to women who have been impacted by the imprisonment of a significant person in their life) and am connected with a cross-denominational network of women in Christian leadership in Sydney and WINGS with The Lausanne Movement. I am also a midwife and have continued to work in that field in clinical practice, education, and research.

Q. What is your favorite quote?

A. "Life is a daring adventure or nothing at all." - Helen Keller

Q. Who has been the most influential person in your life/ministry, and why?

A. There are so many people: my family, friends, and men and women of faith who took time to speak into my life, including Dave Short, Harry Goodhew, John White, John Wimber, and Robyn Claydon. There are also people I have never met, but I have read their stories of faith.

Evangelism. On Point.

Q. Describe a time when you shared your faith in Christ with someone who didn't know him, and then saw God clearly work in that situation.

A. Can I tell three? One was a sweet elderly lady who attended a women's conference

There have also been a number of patients I have nursed. One man, George, stands out. Even though he was sick, I found him helping other patients and constantly telling them of God's love. He wrote to me until he died, always encouraging me to find ways to share my faith with others.

There was also a young girl who I met with every week over a period of months while she was in rehab after an accident damaged her brain in such a way that she could not move or speak. I sat with her and sometimes we'd just look into each other's eyes. I cannot explain it, but God mentored me more in that time than perhaps anywhere else.

Q. What is the best piece of advice you've received?

A. The best piece of advice came from a lady who said to me, "Make sure you don't burn out, because I can assure you no one will thank you!" Although slightly stunned at the time, I have often reminded myself that it is my responsibility to find the balance between doing and being. It leads me to ask, "Who am I becoming in God?" rather than, "What have I done for God?"

Q. What one issue do you believe is the greatest barrier or opportunity to evangelism, and why?

A. God places natural life seasons in our journey that provide opportunities to be more open to the reality of God. I think of transitions we, as women, go through, such as childhood to adolescence and womanhood, studying to entering the workforce, perhaps marriage, perhaps pregnancy and birth, times of celebrations and times of grief, successes and failures. These are all opportunities to meet with people and help them discover an awakening to God's love.

Q. What book do you most often recommend to others to read, and why?

A. The Bible, nothing else compares. Beyond that, it very much depends upon who I am talking to. In fact, I think it is more important for me to be reading what others are reading. This has especially helped when I read what corporate men and women have been encouraged to read in their workplace.

Q. What would you like to be doing in ten years?

A. I would like to be putting a smile on my Lord's face.

Q. How can people be praying for you?

where I was a speaking. She came up at the end to tell me she liked what I said but that she was not a Christian. I simply asked, "What on earth are you waiting for?" She started crying, said, "I don't know," and gave her heart to God right then and there. Later I heard she had connected with the church, loved going to Bible study, and was an encouragement to many people.

The second was a gym instructor who knew I was a Christian. She came to me after seeing the movie "The Passion of the Christ" and asked if she could have coffee with me. We went to have coffee and she asked, "Did God really do that for me?" We talked about Jesus and I told her how much it meant for me to discover God's ongoing love and forgiveness. She gave her heart to Jesus at that sidewalk café. Today she loves God and has seen her husband come to God through the Alpha course.

The third one is very different. It is encouraging to know that sometimes out of the saddest things God can bring life. A fellow midwife was diagnosed with inoperable cancer. I went to see her as a friend, and over a few weeks of me sitting with her and reading to her from the Bible about how much God had always loved her and how beautiful heaven was, she gave her heart to God. Before she died, she met with her three closest friends and asked them to see ask me about God. Two of those friends approached me at her funeral. A year after my friend's death, having met regularly, one of those friends has come to accept God's love for her.

A. I would be so touched to think someone might pray for me from this! Please pray that I will be faithful always and that my life might help others find there way to God. May I remain abandoned to his grace, anchored in his love, and living fully in the open palm of my king.

LAUSANNE REPORTS

Summary Report on Lausanne Theology Working Group

By Chris Wright and Rosalee Velloso Ewell

In February 2010 the Lausanne Theology Working Group (LTWG) met in Beirut, Lebanon, for its third and final pre-Cape Town 2010 consultation. The topic, “The Whole World,” was the third in a series of consultations on the theological significance of the three phrases of the Lausanne Covenant, “*The whole Church taking the whole gospel to the whole world.*” The first consultation on “The Whole Gospel” was held in February 2008 in Chiang Mai; the second on “The Whole Church” took place January 2009 in Panama.

In Lebanon, twenty-three people from fourteen countries convened and worked together around four plenary papers and sixteen case studies on what is meant by “the world.” The group met in facilities provided by the [Arab Baptist Theological Seminary](#), and in collaboration with the [WEA-Theological Commission](#).

The findings of the Beirut consultation will be published and offered to the greater Lausanne Movement and others as part of the contribution of the LTWG to the preparation for [The Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization: Cape Town 2010](#).

Each morning participants studied Colossians together, since in it Paul makes clear the cosmic significance of Jesus Christ in creating, sustaining, and reconciling the whole world to God—and the correspondingly vast relevance of the gospel to the whole world at every level. The biblical themes that arose from the daily Bible study informed and infused the group’s reflection on papers and case studies.

The consultation was framed around six major themes:

- The World in the Bible
- The World of God’s Creation
- The World of Religions
- The World of the Globalized Public Square
- The World of Violence
- The World of Poverty and Injustice

Prior to the meetings the participants received four plenary papers offered by Chris Wright (“The World in the Bible”), Vinoth Ramachandra (“The Global Public Square”), Tan Kang-San (“Multi-Religious Belonging”), and Peter Harris (“From a Theology to a Missiology of Caring for Creation”), and many case studies on topics as varied as “The Threat of Nuclear Disaster,” “The World of HIV-AIDS,” “Israel

and the Challenge of Christian Zionism,” and “The Violence of the World of Drugs and Human Trafficking.”

To ensure a more thorough analysis and engagement of the case studies, the participants were divided into two smaller groups; each was responsible for looking at half of the case studies and providing summary reports to the whole group. These reports, along with the results of the discussions of the plenary papers and the study of Colossians, resulted in the production of the Consultation Findings, which will be made available in the coming months.

During the discussions it was evident that there are many ways in which these themes are interrelated. The issues are complex and they shape the ways in which we live in the world, yet they are also being redeemed in Christ. We are participants in this as we seek to be faithful witnesses to the gospel of Jesus.

Highlights of the consultation included:

- **A commitment to proclaiming in word and deed that care for creation is a gospel issue.** If Christians around the globe understand it as such, the witness of the Church will be more faithful and will open itself up to sharing the good news of the gospel in new and transformative ways.
- **A new awareness of consumerism as an idolatry, especially in the Western world,** where it rarely goes unchecked by individual Christians or the Church. There is, therefore, the need for confession and repentance.
- **A commitment to share and participate in grassroots efforts of peace and reconciliation in a world of so many types of violence,** because evangelism is also the church proclaiming and living gospel life to the world of violence and death.
- **An understanding that poverty is not the result of a lack of resources, but a product of personal and institutionalized injustice and greed, ethnic prejudice, and consumerism.** In God’s grace, followers of Christ are being shaped into a community with mutual concern and responsibility for the well-being of the whole world and particularly for the most vulnerable. This calling demands critical consumption, creative production, prophetic denunciation, and advocacy for and mobilization of the victims of world injustice.

The consultation ended with a renewed commitment to understand that, as Christians, we are called to live out our discipleship in a world of brokenness. We must further confess that we have been complicit in the brokenness, but also empowered by God’s Spirit to participate in its redemption. Such participation includes saying no to consumerism as an idolatrous way of life, being present to and with those who suffer, and relearning the limits of creation so that our lives, churches, and communities reflect the powerful way in which God has reconciled the world to himself in Jesus Christ.

Dr. Chris Wright, international director of [Langham Partnership](#), is an Irishman who lives in London, with his heart firmly planted in the Majority World. **Dr. Rosalee Velloso Ewell** is Brazilian. She has a Ph.D. in biblical theology from Duke University and lives in Londrina, Brazil. She serves as New Testament editor for the *Latin American Bible Commentary*, participates in the Lausanne Theology Working Group, is married and has three children.

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